

Finally, the bill authorizes \$7.35 billion in funding for the program in FY08—an increase of over \$400 million from this year's level.

Oregon's Department of Education reports that, as of January 2007, 43.2 percent of eligible children cannot participate in the program due to lack of funding. Head Start is a highly successful program, and it ultimately costs all of us when those eligible cannot participate.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of the Head Start Program and I am encouraged by H.R. 1429, the Head Start Improvement Act of 2007.

I am a Head Start kid. I have firsthand experience of the comprehensive education programs and opportunities that Head Start provides to low-income families.

Head Start programs promote school readiness by assisting with the social and cognitive development of young children. Research consistently identifies the early years of a child's development as ever more crucial to the child's lifetime success.

Many Head Start programs already try to incorporate new research into their strategies through education, health, nutrition, and social services. This bill ensures that local Head Start programs have the resources to undertake the best practices for furthering a child's development.

Head Start is about the family. As I received education and health services, my mother learned valuable lessons on how to become a more active and involved parent in America's public school system.

I am glad to see that this bill maintains the existing shared governance structure to help empower parents and allow programs to be responsive to local needs.

What's more, this bill is good for Head Start teachers. This bill takes the necessary steps to ensure that Head Start teachers' salaries and professional development are in line with the responsibility that we assign to them.

The Head Start Improvement Act of 2007 is a good bill that will keep Head Start strong so it can remain the great program that it was for me, and continues to be for so many Americans.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to support the Improving Head Start Act, a bill that will strengthen our nation's premiere early childhood education program and expand its services to thousands more children across the country.

Head Start has been improving lives and increasing opportunities for children and families for more than 40 years. With this important program, we teach our children that they can succeed, regardless of background or family income. We open doors to millions and prepare them for future success in school and careers.

This bill provides much-needed amendments to Head Start that will improve workforce quality by increasing funding for staff salaries and professional development, and enhance coordination between early education and primary schools. It also strengthens standards and accountability to ensure that our children are getting the best quality care and education.

I am also pleased that this House defeated a divisive and misguided motion that would, for the first time, legitimize publicly funded religious discrimination in the Head Start program. It would have given taxpayer money to

Head Start centers and allow those centers to exclude taxpayers from jobs solely on the basis of their religious beliefs. It would be a green light for religious bigotry. Its passage would have been bad for education and bad for religion and I joined the National Head Start Association, the Interfaith Alliance, and countless other secular and religious advocates of the Head Start Program in opposing it. I am glad that we have a clean bill to pass today.

I also urge my colleagues to not only vote for this bill, but to continue to advocate for Head Start by supporting full funding for the program. It is not enough to pass the legislation—we need to give our communities the resources they need to carry out our mandates.

I thank Chairman MILLER, Chairman KILDEE and the Committee on Education and Labor for their work on this important legislation, and urge its final passage today.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the Improving Head Start Act of 2007. Over and over again, rigorous evaluations have shown that Head Start and Early Head Start works. It improves the lives of our neediest children and families.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the bill at hand, as it makes several positive changes to the Head Start program. It authorizes \$450 million new dollars to the program, which is enough to provide up to 10,000 new spots for children. It prioritizes program improvement by increasing funding for teacher and staff salaries and professional development. It suspends the National Reporting System, which is a flawed testing system that does not adequately assess this comprehensive system.

Science has shown that providing a quality early education experience leads to healthy brain development that prepares children for success in school, as well as later in life. Access to high quality early education, as well as to wrap around, comprehensive services, really sets the foundation for children and their parents.

I urge my colleagues to support this strong, bipartisan bill. It will directly improve the lives of many, many children and families.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1429, the Improving Head Start Act of 2007. Since 1965, the Head Start early childhood education program has provided low-income children with comprehensive child development, educational, health, nutritional, and social activities to ensure that they are ready to enter kindergarten on an equal playing field with other children. H.R. 1429 will expand and improve the successful Head Start program, which research has shown works in raising children's achievement.

I want to thank Representatives KILDEE, CASTLE and Chairman MILLER for their outstanding leadership on this bipartisan bill, which would allow as many as 10,000 more children to access the benefits Head Start. It improves classroom and teacher quality, raising the qualifications of teachers and increasing funding for teacher and staff salaries and professional development. The bill also includes strong accountability measures to better ensure that Head Start funds are used appropriately and efficiently and that underperforming programs are either replaced or quickly improved.

As a former educator, I understand the importance of closing the school-readiness gap

and ensuring that all children can start their education on an equal playing field. Today, we have the opportunity to pass a bill that will make great strides toward just that.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the amendment offered to the Head Start reauthorization bill by my friend and colleague from Texas, Congresswoman EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON.

This amendment would encourage partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Head Start.

This amendment builds on the important step that the underlying bill takes. That is, H.R. 1429 will require that fifty percent of Head Start teachers have a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education by 2013.

This amendment would create a partnership between the Secretary of HHS and HBCU's to meet the new degree requirements. It would require those who benefit from this partnership to teach at a Head Start program for a period of time equivalent to the time they received assistance.

This is a significant amendment not only because it will provide students with qualified teachers in their classrooms, it will also set a good example for these students. In fact, evidence suggests that students who attend early childhood programs have a better chance of success later in life. In an article published in the *Developmental Psychology* journal of the American Psychological Association in 2005 showed that children in Early Head Start had better test scores, had better cognitive and language development. These children also showed less aggressive behavior than non-early Head Start children, which goes towards improving the overall environment of our elementary and secondary schools.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment and the underlying bill.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the bill shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the 5-minute rule and shall be considered read.

The text of the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute is as follows:

H.R. 1429

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the "Improving Head Start Act of 2007".*

#### SEC. 2. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

*Section 636 of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831) is amended to read as follows:*

#### "SEC. 636. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

*"It is the purpose of this subchapter to promote the school readiness of low-income children—*

*"(1) by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development in a learning environment that supports children's growth in language, literacy, mathematics, science, social and emotional functioning, physical skills, and approaches to learning; and*

*"(2) through the provision to low-income children and their families of health, educational, nutritional, social, and other services that are*